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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 003411

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: TFG AMBASSADOR REPORTS MILITARY CAMPAIGN
AT "END STAGE"

REF: ADDIS ABABA 3212 (NOTAL)

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, A.I. JANET WILGUS. REASON: 1.4 (D).

¶11. (S) SUMMARY. In a December 28 meeting with USAU Amb. Courville and deputy pol-econ counselor (note-taker), the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia's (TFG) PermRep to the AU and Ambassador to Ethiopia, Amb. Abdulkarim Farah, responded to a series of questions asked by Amb. Courville on the status of the military campaign launched by TFG and Ethiopian forces (ENDF). Farah stated that the campaign was now "at the end stage," following the capture of 21 cities within the last 48-72 hours. The TFG troops and Ethiopian forces currently have no plans to enter either Mogadishu or Kismayo. Council of Islamic Court hard-liners have reportedly fled December 27 from Mogadishu to Raas Kaamboni, near the Kenya border. At Amb. Courville's request, Farah outlined the TFG's political and diplomatic next steps. Farah emphasized the main objective is to establish a stable transitional government which necessitates building grassroots support. Farah outlined TFG efforts to reach out to three key constituencies: the academic/ intellectual community, women, and business. Amb. Farah identified possible key troop contributors for either an IGASOM or AU peace building force: Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, and South Africa. END SUMMARY.

MILITARY SITUATION "AT END STAGE"

¶12. (S) On December 28, the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia's (TFG) PermRep to the AU and Ambassador to Ethiopia, Amb. Abdulkarim Farah, reported that the military campaign by TFG and Ethiopian forces (ENDF) in Somalia was now "at the end stage," following the capture of 21 cities within the last 48-72 hours. Farah stated that the TFG does not plan to enter Mogadishu, at least until "the hearts of the people are known." Ethiopian forces had specific instructions not to enter any cities; special TFG units were ensuring proper security within cities, as part of a pre-arranged plan, he said. While the TFG had announced a ceasefire four days ago, the TFG had had to defend itself from Council of Islamic Court (CIC) attacks on Baidoa. The TFG/ENDF had faced little resistance, except in Dinsor and Baidoa; the Somali populace had actually welcomed Ethiopian forces, even inviting them to share food (sacrificing camels) and water, Farah said. There

had been minimum casualties in four days of fighting.

¶ 13. (S) Farah said that CIC "extremists" fled Dec. 27 via boat from Mogadishu to Raas Kaambooni (southernmost tip of Somalia). They could shelter in place for nearly one month while seeking to escape), due to the physical isolation of the location. Farah said that foreign fighters were now trapped within Somalia. He reported looting in Mogadishu, where the CIC had stockpiled munitions, food stocks, as well as cash revenue from the Mogadishu port.

¶ 14. (S) TFG forces' military rules of engagement were not to punish any individuals who remained in Mogadishu, Farah said. There were no plans for TFG troops to take over Kismayo, as civil society (academic, women, business leaders) had taken over there.

RESIGNATION OF ICU LEADERSHIP

¶ 15. (S) In a public statement issued at 8 p.m. local time on Dec. 27, ICU leaders had announced their resignation, and the return of control to the Somali people, Farah noted. Prior to publicly announcing his resignation from the CIC, on Dec. 27 Sheikh Sharif Ahmed phoned PM Ghedi (a family member, according to Farah), requesting assistance from TFG Prime Minister Ghedi to save his life. Farah said PM Ghedi told Ahmed to:

-- Call a ceasefire, if he still had the authority, in order to save Mogadishu.

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-- Announce the handover of CIC forces to TFG troops: declare willingness to be part of TFG security structure, and to dialogue with TFG on political integration.

-- Speak to CIC supporters, and then to report their views.

Amb. Courville asked about the status and safety of Sheikh Sharif Ahmed. The TFG believes that as a moderate Sheikh Sharif Ahmed does not pose a real threat. Farah said Ahmed faced danger from CIC hard-liners such as Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys and Adan Hashi Ayro, but not from the TFG.

TFG NEXT STEPS

¶ 16. (C) Amb. Courville asked what was the primary objective of the TFG following the military campaign, and underscored the importance of outreach by the TFG to build grassroots support among the Somali population, in order to overcome previous challenges and to secure stability for the region.

¶ 17. (C) Farah responded that the TFG's primary political objective was the formation of "a responsible government," as the CIC had taken advantage of the TFG's weakness. He acknowledged that the CIC's ability to promote public order had helped foster support for their movement.

¶ 18. (C) Farah said that the TFG was now reaching out to the Somali population to win popular support, as well seeking to include the diaspora as stakeholders. PM Ghedi was underscoring that the Somali people would choose another government in 2009.

¶ 19. (C) TFG ministers and MPs were being sent to their hometowns to work with local elders on the selection of government representatives in a transition process that would last 1-2 months; the TFG was guaranteeing security, Farah said.

-- On Jan. 1, PM Ghedi would visit Beledweyne. PM Ghedi was

advised not to go to Mogadishu; the TFG interior minister may go instead.

-- Within the last 10 days, the TFG had established the country's largest radio transmitter in Baidoa, broadcasting medium- and short-wave programs which could be heard as far away as Bosasso. TFG radio now highlighted the TFG's willingness to politically engage any moderate ICU remaining in Mogadishu.

¶10. (C) Farah outlined TFG efforts to reach out to three key constituencies: the academic/intellectual community, women's groups, and the business community.

-- PM Ghedi and President Yusuf had publicly stated that teachers of radical madrassas were not at fault, but had been pushed by ICU extremists who fled.

-- Prof. Hussain Bodd was to issue a statement today on behalf of intellectuals, rejecting the ICU in any form.

-- Farah recognized the need for more women in government, noting that the TFG had one female minister among 260 TFG representatives.

-- Farah noted that the TFG had announced that a chamber of commerce would be established in Mogadishu, with composition determined locally; the TFG would only set policy.

-- The TFG also recognized the need to engage "brainwashed" youth who had supported the CIC, Farah added. They were now being fed and held in special facilities, he said.

POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENT OF A PEACE BUILDING FORCE

¶11. (C) Farah noted that due to the improved security environment, deployment under IGAD and AU auspices (IGASOM)

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now called for a peace building or peace support operation, rather than a peacekeeping force. Forces, not equipment, were needed to deploy to Baidoa, so as not to lose momentum, he said. Farah asserted that no other African troop-contributing country (TCC) would be as effective as Ethiopia. Amb. Courville asked Farah to identify what would be acceptable African troop contributing countries. Farah said that Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa were possible TCCs, only awaiting a request from the AU. "Kenya is ready," he added, while Djibouti and Eritrea would not contribute troops. Contrary to the misconception that regional actors could not assist Somalia, Farah noted that the national stabilization plan passed by TFG parliament provided for the possible role of Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, Sudan, and Uganda. Farah observed that under the concept of operations for IGASOM, TCCs were to self-finance deployment for an initial 90 days.

¶12. (C) Amb. Farah concluded by agreeing that Kenya, as current chair of IGAD, was an appropriate choice to lead a joint AU-IGAD political mission to Somalia. Farah said he would contact Kenya's ambassador to Ethiopia, and coordinate further with Amb. Courville.

¶13. (C) COMMENT: Amb. Farah's assessment that the military campaign has reached an "end stage" echoes recent public remarks by Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles that military operations are half over, and that the duration and scope of the conflict will be limited. Amb. Courville stressed the need for the TFG to work with its neighbors in order to promote regional stability. Farah acknowledged the importance of strengthening ties with Djibouti, noting that Djibouti and Somalia shared a common culture and language. Amb. Farah's observation that CIC hard-liners have fled Mogadishu and have sought refuge at Raas Kaambooni, near

Kenya, raises the possibility that a concentration of
high-level targets may be subject to apprehension or capture.
END COMMENT.

AUTHORIZED BY AMBASSADOR COURVILLE
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